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*J. A. G. Ardila\**

## **Metapragmatic First-Order Politeness in Peninsular Spanish**

### **Abstract**

Research on Spanish politeness has developed dramatically in the past decade. One of the most influential theses regarding Spanish politeness was posited by Hickey (1991), who, in comparing Spanish to English, concluded that Peninsular Spanish has a positive politeness model. Subsequently, a number of linguists have further compared politeness in Spain to politeness in Britain. In analysing countless samples of expressive politeness (i.e. requests, apologies, terms of address, etc.), these authors have come to the conclusion that positive politeness predominates in Spain. However, such critical tendencies ignore the latest trends in politeness studies: one year after the publication of Hickey's (1991) essay, Watts *et al.* (1992) vindicated the need to discern first-order politeness from second-order politeness, and put forward the relevance of metapragmatic discussions of politeness. Descriptivist assessments of Spanish politeness prevent linguists from attempting a metapragmatic methodology that help to determine where Spanish speakers stand in the politeness-impoliteness continuum. Nonetheless, current research on general politeness studies clearly envisages that this is a task that Spanish linguistics will need to fulfil in the long run. This paper offers a metapragmatic examination of linguistic politeness in Spain, based on the data obtained from 100 informants in Extremadura, aged 14 to 20. The information drawn from the survey indicates that, whilst the informants are fully aware of the politeness norms they have been taught by their parents and teachers, their linguistic performance seldom abides by such parameters.

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## 1. Introduction

In 1991, Hickey compared Spanish to British politeness and concluded that Spaniards tend to use the strategies that characterise positive politeness. After Hickey (1991), all subsequent publications on Spanish politeness (but Haverkate 1994) have acknowledged his thesis that positive politeness prevails in contemporary Spanish – e.g. Márquez Reiter (2000) and Ballesteros (2001) have analysed requests and apologies which confirm the Spanish tendency to positive politeness; Ardila's (2002a) article on semiotics and politeness in Spain and Britain has also shown that positive politeness can be found in Spanish semiotic codes. So influential has Hickey's theory become, that the study of politeness in Spanish has become stagnated in this sort of anchorage conclusion, which most researchers dare not question. In addition to many operose studies into the nature of Spanish requests (e.g. Márquez Reiter 2000; Ballesteros 2001), apologies (e.g. Márquez Reiter 2000), and colloquial discourse (e.g. Briz 1996; Hernández-Flores 1999, 2001), scholars have examined the nature of Spanish face. Bravo has thus suggested that face-threatening acts in Spanish are somehow mitigated by what she termed *confianza*, i.e. a sense of familiarity that conditions linguistic interaction in Spain. Bravo's points have been elaborated by Hernández-Flores (2001, 2004a, 2004b) and Villemoes (2003; Villemoes/Kjærbeck 2003), but contended by Ardila (2006).

Nonetheless, the study of Spanish politeness should not be restricted to its alleged tendency to positive politeness. The analysis of face seems to be one of the most intriguing topics for research within Spanish politeness, and it is decidedly the one that opens a wider field for linguists. I would suggest that Spanish face should be understood from a diachronic perspective, i.e. from what Fraser (1990) termed the *social norm view* – which has been largely done in Ardila (2005). However, the publication of *Politeness in Language*, in whose "Introduction" Watts *et al.* (1992) distinguished between what they called *first-order politeness* and *second-order politeness*, does incite to rethink Hickey's (1991) thesis. Watt *et al.* (1992) defined first-order politeness as "the various ways in which polite behaviour is talked about by members of sociocultural groups" (1992: 3), and second-order politeness as "a more technical notion which can only have a value within an overall theory of social interaction" (1992: 4). Hickey's arguments were given on the grounds of technical notions, and therefore focused on second-order

politeness and favoured a descriptive approach, which coincides with Thomas's (1995) later claims on the convenience of studying politeness from the viewpoint of pragmatics, rather than from sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics.

## 2. First-Order Politeness and the Politeness-Impoliteness Continuum

More recently, Eelen (2001) has cogently advocated the study of politeness from outside the realms of pragmatics, specifically from the viewpoint of psycholinguistics and ethnolinguistics. Among the many issues he discusses, Eelen calls for an analysis of impoliteness and encourages the proper understanding of first-order politeness. More recently, Watts (2003) has also insisted on the need to understand impoliteness in addition to politeness. Obviously, in drawing the line that separates politeness from impoliteness, one needs to work with some sort of prescriptive assumptions. Building on the conceptualisation of politeness by Watts *et al.* (1992) and Blum-Kulka (1992), Eelen offers a detailed critique of first-order politeness that may fully justify a new direction in Spanish politeness studies. Eelen begins by distinguishing two sides of first-order politeness: an action-related side, and a conceptual side. According to Eelen:

The action-related side refers to the way politeness actually manifests itself in communicative behaviour, that is, politeness as an aspect of communicative interaction. The conceptual side, on the other hand, refers to commonsense ideologies of politeness: to the way politeness is used as a concept, to opinions about what politeness is all about (2001: 32).

Eelen further understands that action-related politeness and conceptual politeness interrelate to such an extent that it is not quite appropriate to dismiss any one of them. Moreover, he suggests that three kinds of politeness-as-practice should be distinguished in first-order politeness: expressive politeness, classificatory politeness, and metapragmatic politeness. These three categories he describes in the following terms:

Expressive politeness<sup>1</sup> [i.e. first-order politeness] refers to politeness encoded in speech, to instances where the speaker aims at 'polite' behaviour: the use of honorifics or terms of address in general, conventional formulaic expressions ('thank you', 'excuse me', ...), different

request formats, apologies, etc. ..., i.e. the usual objects of investigation in most politeness research. Classificatory politeness<sup>1</sup> refers to politeness used as a categorizational tool: it covers hearers' judgements (in actual interaction) of other people's interactional behaviour as 'polite' or 'impolite'. Finally, metapragmatic politeness<sup>1</sup> covers instances of talk about politeness as a concept, about what people perceive politeness to be all about (Eelen 2001: 35).

In advocating the analysis of first-order politeness, Eelen follows on the footsteps of Ehlich (1992) and Fraser (1990), who have encouraged research of this sort – and also of Blum-Kulka (1992), who even produced a metapragmatic study of Israeli society. Because all societies have a number of rules that “prescribe” (Fraser 1990: 220) their respective politeness models, Ehlich (2001: 35-37) considered that the evaluation of politeness needs to discuss politeness standards – i.e. that it is inappropriate to underestimate any metapragmatic discussions on politeness for being more or less prescriptive.

It is only a matter of commonsense that where there is a polite way of expressing oneself, there also has to be an impolite way. Variations at the *parole* level were noticed by Thomas, who claimed that “Some of these constraints [maxims of politeness] may apply (in differing degrees) universally (the Politeness Principle itself); others might be entirely culture-specific (certain taboos); others still (Pollyanna?) might be totally idiosyncratic” (1995: 167). On the basis of Thomas's observation, three different levels of politeness realisation ought to be taken into account in order to understand politeness: a universal level, a cultural level, and an idiosyncratic level (cf. Ardila 2003b). This theory was illustrated (apud Ardila 2005) with the usage of the politeness marker *thank you*: generally speaking, all languages possess politeness markers which help the speakers to express politeness; however, the frequency in the use of *thank you* and its equivalent forms in other languages may vary from one language/culture to another; moreover, the use of politeness markers in a specific language/culture is amenable to the speakers' individual performance. *Grosso modo*, the three levels of politeness realisation are tantamount to Saussure's *langue-parole* dichotomy: the existence of languages is a universal communicative phenomenon; and each linguistic code possesses a standard norm, which is performed by its speakers. In the politeness-impoliteness continuum, the politeness end is located where the culturally-established norms lie,

whereas those performances that fail to comply with those norms are to be found in the impoliteness end. For example, greeting our work colleagues when we first see them in the morning is a polite norm (in Britain and Spain alike); not saying anything at all, on the contrary, is an impolite performance of the culturally-established norm. Between greeting and not greeting there lies a continuum of formulae, e.g. *Good morning!*, *Hello there!*, *Hello!*, *Hi!*, *How are you?*, *(Are) you alright?* or *Hey!*

### 3. Politeness and Metapragmatics

Ehlich (1992: 77) observed that “The actor’s choice between alternative actions ... is established by principle. The alternative actions themselves may be restricted by social conditions, but this does not prevent basic optionality from being a condition of ‘polite’ activity”. His claim intriguingly points to the possibility to analyse speakers’ optionality regarding politeness on the basis of the three levels of politeness realisation. It would be worth acknowledging a number of universal politeness phenomena in order to observe how culturally-established conventions are performed by speakers of different cultures. This sort of research should purport to examine first-order politeness and, more specifically, metapragmatic politeness, since it analyses instances of talk about politeness.

The first metapragmatic study was carried out by Blum-Kulka (1992), who described first-order politeness in Israel. I agree with Blum-Kulka (1992), Demuth (1986), Clancy (1986), Gleason *et al.* (1984), Snow *et al.* (1990) and Yahya-Othman (1994) that politeness on the cultural level is learned by children in their vernacular and educational environments. This claim, I believe, is equally valid for the cultural communities which these authors studied (such as the Israeli, the Swahili or the Japanese) and for Spanish society. Indeed the rules which everyone is instructed at home and at school determine where the polite end of the politeness-impoliteness continuum is located in one’s linguistic performance.

Despite the work by Watts *et al.* (1992), Ehlich (1992), Blum-Kulka (1992) and Eelen (2001), the linguists who have observed the conspicuous absence of politeness formulae and markers in Peninsular Spanish have avoided all metapragmatic considerations. Rather than recording

again and again a few discourse samples taken from Spanish speakers so as to corroborate that politeness in Spain is of the positive sort, Spanish politeness studies do ask for a metapragmatic examination never attempted.

Understanding Spanish politeness from the viewpoint of metapragmatics is a crucial must – since many Spanish sociologists and intellectuals have traditionally regarded Spanish society to be conspicuously impolite. (Instead of producing an endless list of authors who have criticised Spaniards for their impoliteness, I will only mention the one I would regard most illustrative, i.e. José Ortega y Gasset, generally regarded as Spain's most influential philosopher of the 20th century, who claimed that Spain is the *empire of impoliteness* [1969: 67].<sup>1</sup>) Similarly, most cross-cultural studies of Spanish and English have shown that many politeness strategies used commonly in Britain are, on the other hand, sparse in Spain. I shall not compare Spanish to British politeness, but I shall borrow from previous comparative studies in order to define a number of culturally-defined politeness norms in Spain. For example, bearing in mind that research (Woodward 1997; Ardila 2003a) suggests that Spaniards use the Spanish T-pronoun where Britons use deference formulae, I shall determine which term of address is desirable according to Spanish cultural norms, and which term of address is actually used on the idiosyncratic level. In so doing, I intend to measure Spanish politeness-impoliteness, but also to learn about the actual differences and similarities between the cultural norms and the performance of politeness in Spain, and the performance of politeness in Britain.

#### **4. A Survey of Spanish politeness norms and performance**

The results which I shall present here have been drawn from the data collected from a questionnaire that was completed by 100 Spanish students of secondary, further, and higher education (from a secondary school in Montijo and from the Faculty of Teacher Education in Cáceres<sup>2</sup>). All

<sup>1</sup> A discussion of Ortega's views can be found in Ardila (2005), where the aforementioned "endless list" is provided. See also Ardila (2006) for details on the remarks by Dámaso Alonso, Javier Marías, and Arturo Pérez-Reverte.

<sup>2</sup> Sociolinguistically, it must be noted that the informants (all from different towns in Extremadura) were generally lower- and middle-class. (Extremadura is the poorest region in Spain.) It would not be sociolinguistically appropriate to compare these Spanish

my informants are from Extremadura and their ages range from 13 to 20 – i.e. secondary students are 13 to 14, further education students are 17 to 18, and higher education students are 18 to 20:

	Male	Female	Total
Secondary Ed., 13 to 14 yrs of age	20	10	30
Further Ed., 17 to 18 yrs of age	15	15	30
Higher Ed., 18 to 20 yrs of age	20	20	40

Table 1. The informants by age and gender.

Although the informants are from the same region and belong to the same age group, the results do offer a relevant approximation to Spanish metapragmatics. Furthermore, this paper could and should open the way for other surveys to measure Spanish politeness-impoliteness in other regions and groups – which, rather than being a suggestion, is indeed a need in order to keep up with the current trends in politeness studies.

In my metapragmatic survey I have asked these informants to answer a number of questions regarding expressive politeness, most of them taken from Eelen (2001) – i.e. requests formats, apologies, terms of address, politeness markers, and conversational etiquette. The informants were told to read the queries and to think carefully about which politeness norms they have been taught by their parents and teachers. They were also requested to consider thoroughly how they perform these politeness norms in a familiar situational context – in Lakoff's (1973) terminology. The informants had to respond *Yes*, *No* or *I do not know* to the following questions<sup>3</sup>:

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students to my students at the University of Edinburgh, who come from a very different social background.

<sup>3</sup> The questions, as they appear in the questionnaire, may seem much too concise, especially for teenagers who ignore the second-order-politeness terminology. It must be noted here that before the students completed the questionnaire, I spend a good while reading and explaining all the questions, giving examples, and answering many queries. No student responded *I do not know* to any of the questions.



1a. Have you been taught at home or at school, explicitly or implicitly, that you must not make requests in an impositive way, v.g. that you should say “Could I borrow your pen, please?” rather than “Lend/Give me your pen”, because impositions are impolite?

1b. Do you actually avoid making impositive requests?

2a. Have you been taught at home or at school, explicitly or implicitly, that you must apologise whenever you disturb anyone in anyway because not apologising (in that situation) is impolite?

2b. Do you actually apologise when you disturb anyone in anyway?

3a. Have you been taught at home or at school, explicitly or implicitly, that you must use the pronoun *Usted* when you address people who deserve to be referred to in a deferral and polite way, such as older people, teachers, and others, because it is polite to do so?

3b. Do you actually use the pronoun *Usted* to address people who deserve to be treated with deference?

4a. Have you been taught at home or at school, explicitly or implicitly, that you must say *gracias* whenever you want to show appreciation, because it is polite to do so?

4b. Do you actually say *gracias* to show appreciation?

5a. Have you been taught at home or at school that you must say *por favor* whenever you make a request, because it is polite to do so?

5b. Do you actually say *por favor* when you make a request?

6a. Have you been taught at home or at school that you must not shout when you are engaged in a conversation, because it would be impolite to do so?

6b. Do you actually avoid shouting when engaged in a conversation?

7a. Have you been taught at home or at school that you must not whisper when you are engaged in a conversation, because it would be impolite to do so?

7b. Do you actually avoid whispering in a conversation?

8a. Have you been taught at home or at school that you must not interrupt the speaker who has not finished their turn, because it would be impolite to do so?

8b. Do you actually avoid interrupting the speaker who has not finished their turn?

## 5. The Results

The table below shows the percentage of informants who responded *yes* to the *a* questions, i.e. those who have been taught to express politeness in the way indicated:

	Secondary Ed.		Further Education		Higher Education		Total
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	
Question 1	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Question 2	100	100	100	93	100	85	96
Question 3	100	100	100	100	100	90	98
Question 4	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Question 5	100	100	100	100	90	100	98
Question 6	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Question 7	70	60	100	100	100	100	88
Question 8	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 2. The informants' politeness norms.

The following table shows the percentage of students who, having answered *yes* in the *a* questions, responded *yes* to the *b* questions, i.e. those who comply with the norms they have been taught:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> One must also note that the percentages indicate the conscious performance of the politeness norms, but not the actual performance, which may be less frequent.

	Secondary Ed.		Further Education		Higher Education		Total
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	
Question 1	30	20	33	20	20	60	30
Question 2	45	40	13	21	30	64	35
Question 3	30	20	0	6	20	16	15
Question 4	0	30	40	20	35	40	27
Question 5	0	20	0	0	0	20	6
Question 6	10	30	73	80	35	70	49
Question 7	100	66	100	86	95	80	87
Question 8	10	30	0	13	0	30	13

Table 3. The informants' performance in the politeness-impoliteness continuum.

The average in the performance of polite norms is 32 per cent – i.e. less than one third of the informants meet with the polite norms they have been taught. Extremaduran teenagers are clearly closer to the impolite end of the politeness-impoliteness continuum, and substantiate the fact that those authors (*supra*), who loath to deem Spanish culture more or less polite than other cultures, fail to understand that the idiosyncratic performance of politeness in Spain does not comply with its culturally-established norms. In as much as the above data are representative of Peninsular Spanish, the idiosyncrasy of Spaniards becomes unmistakably impolite. Quite interestingly, however, the data obtained from the questionnaire demonstrate that the Spanish norms are very similar to the performance of politeness in Britain.

## 6. Spanish Metapragmatics from a Cross-Cultural Perspective.

My questionnaire shows that Spaniards are generally taught not to make requests in an impositive manner; yet only 30 per cent of my informants tend to avoid impositions. In comparing requests in Spanish and English, Márquez Reiter (2000: 54-55) has pointed out that “we could speculate that the requests and apologies ... show that a larger number of requests realised by imperative constructions in Uruguayan Spanish; and higher use of formulaic remedies in British English”. Albeit Márquez Reiter's study concerns Uruguayan Spanish, it proves that British

English tends to avoid impositive formulae. In a previous article, this linguist stated:

Both in Spanish and English requests can be linguistically realised with imperatives, interrogatives, negative interrogatives and declaratives. From the data collected by a discourse completion test based upon Blum-Kulka's et al. (1989) Cross Cultural Speech Act Realisations Project (CCSARP) administered to native speakers of Spanish and English as part of my MA dissertation and the subsequent recording of naturally occurring data in both languages, it was seen that the use of imperatives in Spanish is higher than that acceptable in English, 29% and 10% respectively (1997: 145).

In short, my Extremaduran informants are aware that in their cultural environment it is impolite to make requests in an impositive way; however, they consistently infringe this norm – which, conversely, Britons seem to respect. Therefore, it might be stated that, in as much as requests are concerned and linguistic research suggests, Britons are more polite than Spaniards.

Márquez Reiter (2000) also studied apologies in both British English and Uruguayan Spanish. Her conclusions reveal that Britons bestow much importance upon apologies (cf. Ardila 2005). The above questionnaire reveals that although the majority of Spaniards have been instructed to apologise, they elude apologies. Once again, we find a Spanish norm which coincides with the British use, and which is very often broken by Spaniards. Accordingly, when it comes to apologising, Spaniards are significantly impolite.

One Spanish sociologist (Miguel 1991: 99) has claimed that Spaniards consistently avoid using *usted* because they are influenced by Britons' avoidance of deferral formulae. However, recent research (Ardila 2003a) has suggested that the usage of the address pronoun *usted* has dwindled owing to the historical circumstances of Spain in the second half of the 20th century. That work (Ardila 2003a) and another by Woodward (1997) have further argued (and attested) that the usage of the formal address forms (e.g. *usted* in Spanish and, *inter alia*, *you* + *sir/madam/miss* or *you* + *title* + *surname* in English) is much higher in English than in Spanish. Only 15 per cent of my informants who were taught to use *usted* declare that they use it. In this respect, Spaniards are again very close to the impolite end of the politeness-impoliteness continuum.

A recent study (Ardila 2005) has discussed the variations in the use of politeness markers, such as *thank you* and *please*, in both Peninsular Spanish and British English. In an empirical observation, it was noted (Ardila 2005) that 100 per cent of Northern English youngsters used *thank you*, whereas (in a similar situation) 0 per cent of the Extremaduran youngsters used *gracias*. The research conducted by Pérez Parent (2001) and Hernández-Flores (2001) also proves that Spaniards tend to avoid politeness markers. The empirical study of *thank you* in Northern England (Apud Ardila 2005) indicates that the usage of this polite marker is widespread in Britain – and although some differences may be noted between the North and the South of England, the use of *thank you* in Britain is ubiquitous. The responses to the questionnaire confirm the conclusions reached in previous experiments: 100 per cent of the informants admit that they have been taught to thank their interlocutors in a specific situational context, yet only 27 per cent declare that they do so. Once again, the Spanish norm is very close to the British use; and once again, Extremaduran teenagers acknowledge that they are very close to the impolite end of the politeness-impoliteness continuum.

*Please* is one of the commonest polite markers – it helps to lessen the mitigation of a face-threatening act and it is indicative of the speaker's attitude in the cost-benefit scale. In Britain, the use of *please*, as that of other polite markers such as *thank you*, is frequent in most instances of verbal interaction. On the other hand, my questionnaire shows that the use of *por favor* has been taught to 90 per cent of the Spanish informants, and only 6 per cent of these use it. Not only do Spaniards abuse impositive formulae in their requests (*supra*), but they also disregard the use of *por favor*, which they have learnt at home and at school – thus positioning themselves in the impolite end.

Haverkate (1994: 64) has noted that Spaniards tend to speak in a very loud voice. Conversely, Langford (2000) considers quietness to be one of the characteristics of the English people, and presents the records of many foreign travellers who wrote about how quiet public places were in England. More recently, the speech volume in Spanish and English has been the subject for foreign language learning/teaching research (apud Ardila 2002b) due to the differences between these languages. Also in this respect, the responses to the questionnaire evince the fact that the Spanish performance is far from the norm: 100 per cent of the informants admit they have been warned that shouting is impolite, yet

only 49 per cent are careful not to shout in conversation. The Spanish norm is very close to the British performance; and the Spanish performance is considerably far from the polite end of the polite-impolite continuum.

According to Havertake's (1994: 63) three maxims of the conversational etiquette, whispering is as impolite as shouting. Notwithstanding Britons' penchant for quietness, this topic has not raised any linguistic considerations. Only 88 per cent of the Extremaduran youngsters who completed my questionnaire were warned by their parents or teachers that they should not whisper in conversation. It is in this specific instance where the informants declare to be closer to the polite norm, since 87 per cent indicated that they comply with it. Nonetheless, not whispering in the country that is nowadays the second noisiest country in the world seems to be more a need than a conscious performance of a polite norm – likewise, one could argue that shouting is also unavoidable, and not necessarily an impolite act.

According to Lyons, "It is impolite, in all societies, to speak out of turn: that is, to speak when the social role that one is playing does not grant authority and precedence or, alternatively, when the rules that govern turn-taking in that society do not grant one the authority to speak at that point" (1997: 252). Thomas (1995: 154) and Leech (1983: 139) believe that interrupting the speaker is an impolite act in British English. In her study of contemporary Spanish, Stewart (1999: 178) observed that "There is scope for cross-cultural miscommunication between speakers who do not share the same conventions, such as the need for pre-sequences in certain circumstances or the rule governing the negotiation of 'air-time' or the allocation of turns". A later empirical study (Ardila 2005) on turn-taking and interrupting in Peninsular Spanish and British English (covering 3 hours and 45 minutes of several conversations in the same formal situational context) registered 99 interruptions in the English samples and 594 in the Spanish ones.<sup>5</sup> That study explains that the Spanish participants in those debates deviated

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that the rules concerning interrupting and overlapping vary from one culture to another – e.g. whilst Spaniards tend to interrupt and overlap at will (although they acknowledge this is an impolite practice), Finns usually wait for at least one or two seconds before taking the ground. For a discussion on interrupting, with especial reference to Peninsular Spanish and British English, see Ardila (2004). For the Spanish language see also Kjærbeck (1998a, 1998b).

from their polite norms regarding turn-taking. The above questionnaire corroborates that thesis, because 100 per cent of the informants admitted that they are aware that interrupting is impolite, but only 13 per cent declared that they do not to interrupt. Therefore, the Spanish norm regarding turn-taking is very similar to the British performance: interrupting is impolite. Yet the Spaniards who completed my survey are conscious that they are aware of the fact that their reluctance to abide by this norm is impolite. According to existing research (*supra*), they are indeed more impolite than most Britons.

## 6. Conclusions

The data obtained from the questionnaire proves that Extremaduran youngsters recognise a number of politeness norms. As my survey proves, these norms do not differ from those that regulate interpersonal communication in Britain. Regarding the three levels of politeness realisation, there seems to be a coincidence between the instances of expressive first-order politeness in Spain and Britain – at least in those analysed here, i.e. requests, apologies, terms of address, use of the politeness markers *thank you* and *please*, volume of the voice, and turn-taking. However, whilst research suggests that Britons generally abide by these first-order politeness norms, I can now suggest, on the grounds of my survey, that the group of 100 Spaniards surveyed is not respectful of the politeness norms they admit to have been taught. This has an obvious corollary which makes *tabula rasa* of the extreme eclecticism which previous researchers have embraced: Spaniards (or at least young Extremadurans) are significantly impolite, and much more impolite than Britons – simply because they do not comply with their culturally-established politeness norms, whereas research shows that Britons do to a much larger extent. Certainly, in Brown and Levinson's (1987) terminology, the formulae preferred by the Extremaduran informants are not *non-baldly, on-record acts with positive politeness*, but *baldly, on-record acts* – which are not at all polite.

Nonetheless, my conclusions barely examine the surface of a deep ocean of possibilities for further research. Indeed, there are many areas of Spanish linguistic and metalinguistic politeness (such as phatic communion, conversational etiquette, politeness markers, etc.) still to be explored; yet, ever since Watt *et al.* (1992), Blum-Kulka (1992) and

Eelen's (2001) endeavours to highlight the relevance of metapragmatic first-order politeness, the expediency for the metapragmatic analysis of Spanish politeness becomes imperative to comprehend the global picture of politeness as a communicative phenomenon in Spain. Young Extremadurans are likely to differ in their impolite idiosyncrasy from the speakers in other Spanish regions. More research is therefore needed in order to determine where Spaniards from all regions stand in the politeness-impoliteness continuum – which is a gigantic *tour de force* that could open a countless array of possibilities for research.

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